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# The Portuguese free radio movement in the Southern European context<sup>1,2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

1. The main objective of this article is to provide an understanding of the Portuguese free radio movement while at the same time presenting it as a part of the Southern European movement. Theoretically, we use the concept of media system provided by Hallin and Mancini – in particular, the polarized pluralist model used to describe the Mediterranean countries. The Portuguese movement shared with its Greek counterpart some of the characteristics associated with the sharing and enjoyment of music.
2. Comparison with the French free radio movement allows us to frame the reaction of the Portuguese party political system to the illegal broadcasting phenomenon. The methodological strategy is based on the triangulation of information sources. A total of fifteen in-depth interviews were conducted with free radio activists, parliamentarians and journalists, and press reports and parliamentary debates between 1983 and 1988 were subjected to content analysis. With the study of the recent past we want to contribute towards the public debate about mass media in subjects like regulation and the state, pluralism and public service, media economic groups, freedom of information and expression, and citizenship rights.

## KEYWORDS

free radio in Southern Europe  
Portuguese free radio movement  
polarized pluralist model  
media systems  
media markets  
state regulation

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article presents empirical data from a European country – Portugal – with less tradition in participating in comparative media studies, submitting our findings to broader theoretical discussions like Hallin and Mancini's (2004) media systems model. The process of liberalization of radio broadcasting in Portugal, during the 1980s, can be understood as a privileged object of analysis, which includes systemic approaches and action approaches, in a complementary and dialogic way.

The path started in 1979 with the first illegal broadcasters, and finished with the approval of the radio law 87/88, on 30 July, and the consequent closing of all illegal radios and the public contest for local and regional frequency allocation. This process can be used as an example of the differentiation of the mass media system (Luhmann 1995, 2000). With the objective of proving the differentiation of the mass media system we study the responses of several systems (political, economic and legal). In the same way, the groups in presence (Radio Renascença, public radio – RDP, and free radio movement) are analysed.

Hallin and Macini present a media system model divided into four major dimensions of comparison between media systems:

1. Development of media markets (circulation in the case of the press)
2. Political parallelism (links between the media and political parties)
3. Journalism professionalism (professional associations, college degrees in journalism, ethical rules)
4. Role of the state (degree and nature of state interventions).

(2004)

According to the authors, each dimension of the model is interrelated and can be more or less manifested in a particular national system. These four dimensions allow the construction of a framework for comparative analysis. In their study the authors have chosen a limited set of countries in Western Europe and North America with comparable levels of economic development, common history and culture, and democratic regimes based on pluralism and regular elections.

In Europe, Portugal, Spain and Greece form the so-called third wave of democratization (Huntington 1991) but are nowadays consolidated democracies (Bruneau et al. 2001). Alongside the recent past of transition from dictatorial regimes to democracy, these countries share a similar geographic position in the borders of the Mediterranean Sea and a past of extremely important cultural exchanges. For reasons of analytical convenience France is included in this region, although the country represents a combination of characteristics from both the Mediterranean and the democratic corporatist model (north/central Europe).

According to Hallin and Macini (2004) these models are ideal types and should be understood in that sense. Thus, it is possible that inside the same model different characteristics coexist, and it is even possible that a country that was defined as being part of a model would share some of the characteristics of other models, like France.

The Mediterranean or polarized pluralist model is defined by its 'integration of the media into party politics, weaker historical development of commercial media, and a strong role of the state' (Hallin and Mancini 2004: 11). In this article we intend to explore the four major dimensions of the concept

by presenting evidence collected in the study of the free radio movement in Portugal. In the next sections we analyse each dimension, and in the discussion section we compare the Portuguese case with those of Greece and France.

The methodological strategy is based on the triangulation of information sources. The analysis of press news and reports had two main goals: (1) to identify the individual and collective actors who participated in the free radio movement and to (2) explore the social visibility of the problem and the negotiation process between the movement, the political parties and the national radio broadcasters.

The analysis of parliamentary debates comprises all political proposals and allowed us to identify the political actors, their strategies and their opinions about the mass media system, especially about freedom of expression, and the professionalization of journalists and business models.

The triangulation between press news and parliamentary debates was crucial to systematize an actor's road map and to elaborate an interview guide. The interview guide was organized into four topics (media system, politics, economy, law and regulation) and was presented to the interviewees in different formats according to their profile. A total of fifteen interviews were recorded and included participants in the radio movements, politicians of all four major political parties, and former directors of public radio and Catholic church radio. In the preparation and conduction of the interviews we had some specific cares based on the fact that we were dealing with members of political and cultural elites (Dexter [1970] 2006). Therefore, in the pre-interview phase we searched for the biography and the public thoughts of each interviewee (Kvale 2007).

## 2. THE FORMATION OF THE PORTUGUESE FREE RADIO MOVEMENT: THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

At the beginning of the 1980s, later than elsewhere in Europe, there appeared in Portugal a number of free radio stations with the common aim of providing an alternative to the state and Church radio models. In those days the RDP broadcaster and Radio Renascença (the Catholic radio) operated as a duopoly.

Ana Paula Azevedo separates the phenomenon of free radio broadcasting into three phases:

1. Projects driven by mainly young amateurs;
  2. The involvement of local authorities, cultural and leisure organisations, associations of various natures and entrepreneurial and political interests;
  3. Structured projects on a business footing with qualified professionals.
- (2001)

However, before going on to label the free radio movement that emerged during the 1980s it is important to first introduce, in general terms, the social and political context in which these stations were to appear.

Some authors (Viegas and Costa 2000) have argued that the revolution of April 1974 was a turning point in Portugal's recent history, one that came about as a result of the changes that began taking shape during the 1960s (such as emigration to Europe, the colonial wars and the limited political liberalization known as the Marcelo Spring). Alongside the 1st Provisional Government's formal application in 1977 to join the then European Economic Community

3. Law no. 674 - C/75,  
2 December 1975.

(EEC) and the process of African decolonization, in a very short space of time Portugal experienced profound changes to its social structure.

Some of the factors responsible for these changes included the arrival in Portugal of thousands of *retornados*/returnees from the former colonies, the continuing phenomenon of internal migration, and the movement of the population to coastal areas, as well as the changes in the country's age profile caused by a fall in the birth rate and increased life expectancy. Other factors of change included an increase in education levels, particularly within higher education, which grew from 20,000 students in 1960 to 130,000 in 1989, the rise in the number of economically and educationally active women, the legalization of divorce, the enlargement of the public health service, and the development of social security services (Guerreiro et al. 2009).

The post-revolutionary period was also marked by the implementation of the freedom of expression and association, and by a profound process of democratic apprenticeship that involved all social classes. This was the period when voluntary movements and associations were created in such areas as housing, culture, education, consumers' rights and social communication. We can understand this outbreak of associative activism as a response to the aspirations for a more democratic society that fails, however, because of the lack of experience of life in a democracy, which is translated into a 'very incipient civic culture' (Cabral 2000).

Given the constraints, we can view the free radio movement as a means of expression for Portuguese associative activism, attempting by studying it to obtain a more thorough insight into the problems at the organizational level, of the negotiating processes that made the problem visible to public opinion, and how the outcome (the legalization of the stations) ultimately put an end to the movement.

Social change, which is always surrounded by paradoxes and ambiguities, does not take place at a regular or well-defined pace. On the one hand, it established possibilities for individual and collective participation in the many spheres of social life; on the other, the state, through its policy of nationalization, attempted to control private initiative, with included organs of social communication that were of strategic importance for the relationship between political power and the citizen.

### 2.1. Development of media market

The emergence of a free radio movement in Portugal can be seen as a part of the development of the media market. In the 1980s all newspapers were detained by the state, since they were nationalized in 1975.<sup>3</sup> Radio and television was also state controlled, with the exception of the national radio owned by the Catholic Church, Radio Renascença.

The first experiences of illegal broadcasting occurred in 1979, in Lisbon suburbs, and combined radio amateurs, rock and roll music and local news.

Everything began in Odivelas in 1977 with the appearance of Rádio Juventude, a free radio station broadcasting on Saturdays and Sunday on 100Mhz, from its studio hidden in the attic of a block of houses. It was made up of a group of amateur radio enthusiasts and by radio technicians who through it had found a pleasant way to occupy their free time and to entertain the people of Odivelas and its surroundings. The broadcasts were interesting. With few resources and using very basic

equipment their programmes were of a good quality. They broadcast music the listeners liked and local news, something that no-one had ever heard before in Portugal.

(Ondavivre.com 1998–2015)

4. *Onda Livre – Boletim da Comissão Coordenadora Nacional das Rádios Livres* (1 August 1983).

Following Radio Juventude came Radio Imprevisto in 1979, also in Odivelas, then Radio Caos (1981) in Oporto, RAL (1982) in Abrantes, and Radio Livre Internacional (RLI, 1983) in Lisbon, which was funded by Radio Nova-Livre in Paris and by Associação Internacional para a Libertação das Ondas – ALO/ the International Association for the Liberalisation of the Airwaves. RLI was detected by the authorities and forced to move to Coimbra, where it re-established itself and began broadcasting through the university residences.

The terms free, pirate and local were used by the stations to define themselves. The term free radio was specially used by RLI and was part of an international intellectual movement based in France, proclaimed as an inheritance of May 68 protest struggles against capitalism and state repression with common ideals of sharing and promoting culture in local communities through illegal broadcasting (Dalle 2009; Cheval 2001).

Coimbra's RLI defined itself as the only project operating on an international scale:

It is a radio project that was born in Portugal on the wings of the struggle for the liberalisation of the airwaves in France, a project that saw the light of day on 25 April 1983 ... that seeks to be an alternative radio, open to the interchange between the cultures of all the world, associative, local and independent.<sup>4</sup>

Radios conducted by young radio amateurs like Radio Juventude, Radio Imprevisto and Radio Caos preferred the term pirate radio, comparing their activities with British pirate radios in the 1960s and 1970s and presenting their programmes as rebellious and anti-establishment (Boyd 1986).

Radio Caos described itself as a station focusing on adventure, placing itself on the margins of the social communication system as

a route that starts from the edge and seeks the limits and the freedom that these limits can be. Radio Caos is a young and thoughtful station. It learns everything. It debates, attacks, goes far. And it has its feet firmly on the ground and is as it wants to be. As it can be.

(see endnote 4)

Finally, a group of radios, the first in activity was Radio Antena Livre (RAL) from Abrantes, a rural town in Alentejo, defined their vocation as local. Their purpose was to offer regional news prepared by professional journalists.

Oporto's Radio Nova stressed its local nature, of its proximity to resources and aims that were different from those of national broadcasters: 'For this it is enough to realise that free radio stations are local radio stations, they are of the neighbourhoods, and have nothing to do with the large monopoly operators' (see endnote 4).

The first meeting of representatives of the four free radio stations, broadcasting in the north of the country, took place in Oporto on 29 May 1983. This meeting set about preparing a set of common demands to be presented to the authorities calling for the legalization of the pirate stations. I Encontro

Nacional das Rádios Livres Portuguesas/The First National Meeting of Portuguese Free Radio Stations took place in Vila Nova de Gaia on 15 June 1983, at which a coordinating commission was elected and charged to make concentrate forces on an agreed course of action that included the following four: (1) making contact with the government and the ministers responsible for the social communications portfolio; (2) launching a national petition; (3) making collective broadcasts; and (4) collecting statements of support for the movement from public figures. This meeting also established the movement's common concerns:

'The sociocultural vocation of Free Radio', 'its inclusion in a decentralising and regionalist dynamic', the problem of funding, the 'link with social and associative movements', stressing 'the role these broadcasters can assume as the voice of socially marginalised sectors'.

(Azevedo 2001: 117)

The first to sign up to the coordinating commission were Radio Caos from Oporto, RLI from Coimbra, Radio Imprevisto from Caneças and RAL from Abrantes. With the creation of this commission they sought to spread their message to the wider world – to the media and political and economic agents – as well as to other illegal radio stations.

The inaugural meeting of the coordinating commission took place in Coimbra in August 1983. It was open to new members who were given observer status. This meeting decided to publish a newsletter, *Onda Livre*, which would provide information about the movement's aims as well as give them structure. One of the first things required was to define exactly what was meant by the terms free/local/pirate radio. Each of the stations presented their manifesto in which they defined their objectives.

RAL of Abrantes also held to the idea of proximity as defining, although it placed the movement's importance in the struggle for legalization:

The free radio stations are, and must be, organs of communication that are pure, a platform for new languages, channels for creativity and a part of all of our daily lives. They are close to the listener, they strive to ensure they have access to their microphones ... Aware of their importance, of their responsibilities, free radio stations fight to be legalised.

They demand a law that recognises them, a statute that regulates them.

(see endnote 4)

There is greater consensus regarding the free radio movement's contribution to innovation within the radio sector. This innovation took place on seven levels: (1) in programmes and formats; (2) alignment; (3) reports; (4) contact with the people; (5) live broadcasts; (6) in confronting political power; and (7) in opening up the airwaves to the people.

## 2.2. Political parallelism

The relationship of the free radio movement with political actors, political parties and the government was tense and made of advances and setbacks.

The Abrantes meetings marked the first schism within the movement: on one side was the group of stations from the Oporto region who stayed on the margins of the legalization process, adopting a more radical stance; on the



other were those stations led by RAL, which were seeking dialogue with the various local and national authorities. This was the beginning of the passage from phase one to phase two described by Ana Paula Azevedo (2001: 114).

One of the points of disagreement was the Project Law 252/III, which was introduced by Dinis Alves (Socialist Party – PS) and Jaime Ramos (Social Democratic Party – PSD), deputies representing Coimbra. The Oporto stations thought the document was limiting, as can be seen in the communique issued by Radio Caos on 14 November 1983: 'The legal framework described will definitely not have an effective or adequate result without the radio stations, and particularly their representatives, being listened to and heard. The law must be drafted with us, and never at the expense of the main interested parties' (signed by Alberto Guimarães and Daniel Guerra). This part of the movement was afraid of being politicized by the two major parties and of losing the capacity for initiative.

The second group, led by RAL, entered into contact with the two members of parliament, and there followed an exchange of correspondence aimed at improving the document and at pressurizing the political and administrative authorities to speed up the legislative process and exercise some tolerance while carrying out their duties. In November 1983 the post office (Correios, Telégrafos e Telefones – CTT) carried out a series of raids on free radio stations, confiscating equipment and issuing charges.



5. Is a Latin expression used in the legislative process and in civil law which refers to the period between the promulgation of a law and the time the law produces legal effect.

According to the communique issued at the first meeting, the absence of Radio Caos and Radio Delirio of Oporto was responsible 'for the situation of demobilisation at which the movement had arrived and that, since the meeting in Coimbra in January of this year, they have removed themselves definitively from the coordinating dynamic' (RAL communique, 17 March 1984).

A new meeting of radio stations was organized in Abrantes in March 1985, this time in the presence of some politicians: José Niza (Socialist Party), Luísa Cachado of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and Anacleto Baptista (Social Democrat Party/PSD). The representative of the PSD introduced the idea of requesting a *vacatio legis*<sup>5</sup> from the prime minister until the approval and publication of a new broadcasting law, a move that would free all the local radio stations from the risk of being investigated by the broadcasting authorities.

The task of exerting pressure in support of the free radio movement's campaign within parliament began to take shape during the third legislature (1983–1985). Before 1983 the PCP had introduced a broadcasting bill in parliament, which was not heard because of the convocation of early elections following the resignation of Pinto Balsemão's government. The elections, which the Socialist Party won, took place on 25 April 1983. In this parliament the PCP introduced Project Law 79/III, which was discussed along with Left Union for Social Democracy's (União da Esquerda para a Democracia Socialista – UEDS) Project Law 129/III and the PS and PSD's government proposals 73/III (broadcasting law) and 74/III (licensing of broadcasting stations).

The legal projects and proposals shared five common points: (1) the need for the creation of new legislation; (2) the important role of parliament in this legislative process; (3) a public tender as a legal means to move forward with the licensing of radio stations; (4) the establishment of a radio council; and (5) the constitution of a radio museum and a national sound archive (*fonoteca nacional*).

All of the proposals were discussed in a plenary session, with only the PCP's project being rejected on the votes of the PS, PSD and the Democratic and Social Centre (Centro Democrático e Social – CDS), which was therefore prevented from moving to the next stage and being discussed by an expert commission.

Following the parliamentary vote on 9 April 1985, the four remaining documents were put forward to the expert commission for a period of 30 days. However, the legislative programme was interrupted by the president of the republic's decision to dissolve parliament in October 1985. For a second time legislative initiatives on broadcasting had been impeded as a consequence of political instability.

During this period some of the stations gained public importance and maintained a good relation with political actors. Two of those examples were RAL in a small town in Alentejo and TSF in the Lisbon metropolitan area.

RAL stands out in the panorama of regional information, counting on the support of the local council and gaining fame by interviewing public figures, including the president of the republic, António Ramalho Eanes (September 1985), and the minister for education, Augusto Seabra (October 1984). On 6 October 1985 RAL covered the general election in a simultaneous broadcast with the Radio Clube Português de Paris (Azevedo 2001: 116).

The interview with President Ramalho Eanes was remembered as a moment of triumph by one of the station's driving forces:



Later there was that moment of glory in which I walked on air and spent four hours walking behind General Eanes, there was a commemoration celebrating 700 years of the charter of Vila de Rei and Eanes was there and I spent four hours behind him hoping he would speak to RAL of Abrantes, and it was lucky someone was there from ANP (Portuguese News Agency) who made the announcement, the news the next day in the press, 'Eanes speaks with the Abrantes pirate radio station'. It was a decisive contribution: even the president had some notion of this.

(Interview with a local radio station member and associative leader)

The local council's support was made public from the moment regular broadcasts began. The mayor of the council sent a letter to the assistant secretary of state asking for tolerance on the part of the broadcasting authorities, arguing that the station was providing a useful public service – for example, by broadcasting information about the flooding of the river Tagus.

We heard RAL give the news on the top of the hour that helped stop the panic from spreading through the riverside areas that were facing an apparently imminent flood of the Tagus, which was not to be heard on the main channels of social communication, with the television being moved by the catastrophe in Lisbon metropolitan area while RDP (public radio) was completely silent.

(signed, Mayor José dos Santos Jesus)<sup>6</sup>

TSF had a close relationship with the political authorities, which allowed them to behave in a different way. In this testimony we can understand the deeper relation that they had with local authorities. One of the reasons for this close relationship is developed in the next section, dedicated to journalism professionalism.

Enjoying a lot of support from politicians, TSF was able to install an antenna on the roof of Lisbon council's restaurant on top of Monsanto. This is an example of the alliances that existed between the political authorities and local radio.

(Interview with a former radio station director)

In 1988, almost ten years since the beginning of the movement, the Radio Law (87/88 30 July) was published in the wake of the unsuccessful experience of Law 8/87 (11 March), which failed to be implemented.

The fear that the radio stations could start taking political sides led to the production of a law that was very concerned with such questions as the right to broadcast, the right to respond, etc. This fear was shared by all the political parties represented in parliament, which saw in this new means of communication something potentially dangerous simply because it responded to a new agenda-setting logic.

And above all, they were local radio stations, which implied a new type of relationship within the party structures that would take time to refine. Issues that had previously not been considered by the party structures, such as preparing press releases that would appeal to local interests, whether or not to give voice to local leaders, giving them preference over national leaders who are more used to communicating with the media.

6. António Colaço, personal archive. Organized and catalogued by the author.

7. Called 'Verão Quente 1975'/'Hot Summer of 1975'.

8. 'First steps to the creation of the Portuguese Radio Association', letters dated 18 and 28 March 1985.

### 2.3. Journalism professionalism

In the 1970s there were no graduate schools of journalism in Portugal. The first school of journalism was created in 1979 in the New University of Lisbon and it was followed by the Technical University of Lisbon in 1980 (Garcia 2009).

The profession has evolved mainly as press journalists working with several constraints: the state censorship until 1974, low level of investment and circulation, and also low levels of readership (Oliveira 1992). Journalists were organized in a civic union (one of the unions tolerated by the authoritarian regime), which had the control of the entrance to the journalist profession (Garcia 2009). According to José Luis Garcia, in the period comprehended between 1974 and 1987, the number of licences attributed increased from 821 to 1281 journalists. One of the reasons for this growth was the new definition of journalist approved in a meeting of the journalists union in May 1974. In that meeting it was decided that a professional journalist should be considered as not only those working on newspapers but also those working in radio and television.

In the most radical period of the revolution,<sup>7</sup> the *Seculo* newspaper and Radio Renascença were under the control of journalists who intended to put the mass media in the service of the population as an instrument of class struggle (Maxwell 1983). The nationalization of the newspapers in 1975 created a strong politically oriented journalism. Each newspaper was under an indirect control by a political party who had the opportunity to choose the director and some of the journalists. Politics was a major topic of coverage and was covered with a different perspective according to the political affinities of the director (Mesquita 1994).

In the radio sector, journalistic autonomy was also a problematic question. The state-church duopoly prevented innovation in formats and kept the journalists' practices concerning politics focused on government press releases (Figueira 2009).

The free radio movement started to put in question the practices of journalists, especially the lack of regional information and of direct contact with the population through reporting, as well as the lack of confrontation when dealing with politicians.

From the beginning of the movement one of the ideas was to create an association of free radio stations. One of its main objectives was the formation of a common organizing structure that would be capable of convincing the public and the political parties of the urgent need to approve a radio law. Through the creation of a single interlocutor, the radio stations involved attempted to obtain some support from the public and, especially, from among political decision-makers. In 1984, at Abrantes the statutes of the Portuguese Radio Association (APR) were signed. The first to sign up were RAL, TSF and Radio Imprevisto, and the main core of its statutes included

- 3a) to fight for a balanced management of the radio electric spectrum destined for broadcasting and for a division of frequencies that recognises the interests of the country, of the regions, of our associates and the need for different projects to coexist;
- 3b) to represent and defend the interests of our associates before the organs of power and any other public and private bodies;
- 3c) to conduct studies, produce publications and take all initiatives relating to the defence, implantation and divulgation of radio broadcasting.<sup>8</sup>

The first action of the new association was to schedule a series of meetings with various parliamentary groups and the second action was an attempt to make a collective broadcast. Radio TSF assumed the responsibility of offering its studios and managing the broadcast. According to those involved, this broadcast had to be understood as a 'way of exerting pressure on Lisbon and to fundamentally accelerate the process that would lead to the concession of frequencies being unblocked'.<sup>9</sup> To proceed, a request was sent out to all regularly broadcasting free radio stations that were in contact with the movement, asking them, during April 1985, to send recorded clips of an informative, cultural or local nature to the TSF studios in Lisbon, which would enable them to design a timetable for joint programming.

The joint broadcast of May 1985 was a failure, with only four stations getting involved: RAL, TSF, Radio Beira Alta (Guarda) and Radio Hertz (Tomar). This failure had large repercussions on the movement's dynamics, and after this episode RAL, one of the most active stations, resigned. The radio stations' retreat from this joint strategy resulted in the association never being more than a formal intention of its supporters.

From 1986 the pressure for legalization began to increase within the media, in which there continued to be reports of the creation of new radio stations. This period corresponds to a new phase: the appearance of professional radio projects and the introduction of advertising (particularly from commerce and industry, which was attracted by the low prices charged by the free radio stations). TSF, Correio da Manhã Radio, Radiogeste and Radio Cidade in Lisbon, and Radio Nova in Oporto and Radio Azul in Setúbal were all products of this phase.

The radio TSF (in its origin a collective of journalists) was very important in the formation of radio professionals. Before starting to broadcast, TSF managers organized a course specializing in radio journalism, focused on reportage and live broadcasting, and hired major professionals as teachers (Figueira 2009).

According to Luís Bonixé (2006), the distinctive trace of the free radio movement and the first years of legal local radio were the production of a local discourse that was different from that of the national media.

The construction of an alternative local discourse is of great importance for the creation of a sense of community, providing the community with an opportunity to know itself better, whether by access to information about local events or by opening the stations to their listeners through open antenna programmes. The production of local information is, even today, a form of widening the news agenda, one that has been taken up by national and international news agencies. This widening has given a voice to social groups, generally deprived of social space in the news, and has thus contributed towards information pluralism.

Following legalization, the Portuguese local radio stations created a new representational organization (APR – Portuguese Radio Association) and have invested in professional training with the support of state policies.

#### 2.4. The role of the state

In 1976, after a year of parliamentary debates (Vieira and Silva 2010), a new democratic constitution<sup>10</sup> was approved, which established freedom of the press, the end of censorship and the right of citizens to be informed. The policy on social communication was an integral part of the 1st Provisional

9. António Colaço, personal archive.

10. Constitution of 1976, promulgated on 2 April 1976. (<http://www.parlamento.pt/Legislacao/Paginas/ConstituicaoRepublicaPortuguesa.aspx>).

11. Law no. 338/88 from 28 September.

Government's political programme, through a project anticipating the publication of a new press, radio, television and cinema law that, however, failed to materialize. On 26 February 1975 a press law was published regulating the press, radio and television sector. This law prohibited the existence of commercial radio and television. The state was considered the only agent allowed access to broadcasting, in the sense that commercial activities could not satisfy public service demands and also because the spectrum for broadcasting was understood as a public good.

When the first free radio stations started to broadcast illegally, the response of the state was to close down the stations and to confiscate their equipment. CTT (post office and telephones) was responsible with enforcing obedience to the law in matters of radio broadcasting.

For five years public radio did not do anything to respond to this new threat. The regular programmes were kept on air without any changes, especially with concern to local news. Some of the RDP journalists worked in this period as volunteers for some free radio stations, like TSF and *Correio da Manhã* Radio. The former director confirmed in an interview that this happened mainly because there was no control on journalists' activities, but also because journalists wanted to try new formats, which were not allowed on public radio.

In 1985 RDP decided to respond to the threat posed by free stations by creating its own local stations, but they were widely criticized by the press.

And so the local RDP radio stations were created. Against them we were helpless from the start ... In the final analysis we could have argued that by our sticking to the virtues of competition and decentralisation, RDP had come to recognise the strength and vigour of true local radio. However, by definition it was down to us and not to the state to launch radio stations of this nature. It is not legitimate to use taxpayers' money to compete with stations that had not yet even been legalised by the very state that was now promoting local radio stations in such a belligerent fashion ... Implemented on the basis of a legal casuistry (if there is no legislation for local radio stations, then how are they licensed?).

(Guimarães and Guerra, 1985: 10)

In this same year, 1985, the CTT's supervisory activities were suspended. In the opinion of one of the interviewees, seizures by the CTT were clearly insufficient and without any practical effect, serving only to scare:

There were some symbolic seizures of equipment and closing down of some antennas; moreover the RAL of Abrantes had this mystique of moving and running from one place to another so they did not get caught, although it did them no harm to be silent.

(Interview with a former director of RDP)

With the passage to this new phase of the radio movement the pressure for legalization increased. The investment in technology and human resources was incompatible with the illegal nature of the situation in which they operated. The state, as mentioned in the previous section, approved a Radio Law in 1988 and after that free radio stations were forced to shut down in order to apply for a contest of frequencies at a national level.<sup>11</sup> In 1989, 314 licenses were assigned for local radio stations.

### 3. DISCUSSION: PORTUGUESE, GREEK AND FRENCH RADIO MOVEMENTS AND THE POLARIZED PLURALIST MODEL

Free radio stations began appearing in Europe during the 1960s, with the pioneers in the United Kingdom with Radio Caroline, and in Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands and Denmark.<sup>12</sup> They were mainly stations aimed at a younger audience, with broadcasts dedicated to pop and rock music. Behind the group of amateur radio enthusiasts and journalists were businessmen who sought to use the illegal broadcasts as a way of breaking open the state monopoly and establishing a business model based on advertising (Ala-Fossi 2005: 152).

The liberalization of the radio airwaves took place in Italy in 1976 following a decision of the constitutional court stating that the state-run Radiotelevisione Italiana's (RAI) monopoly was illegal. All of the radio stations operating at the time were declared legal; however, the lack of any consideration of what could follow, allied with the failure to develop any specific laws for the sector, transformed the radio and television media into an anarchic space of unregulated competition. Nevertheless, there emerged several community radio projects, such as Radio Alice in Bologna and Radio Popular in Milan. According to Eco and Grieco (1978) 20–30 per cent of all radio stations at this time were either community stations or described as political stations, which sought to change the way radio was produced and heard in Italy, opening it up to the listeners by allowing them to freely participate in the creation of programmes in which the programmes advocated unmediated forms of communication: that is, transmitters that were open to the public.

In West Germany the liberalization of the airways took place in 1984.<sup>13</sup> The model of local radio existed during the pre- and post-liberalization period in two formats: commercial and communitarian. The latter model has been studied by Jan Pinseler (2008), who noted its importance in what its promoters called a kind of public counter-sphere. This idea of a public counter-sphere was concerned with what activists said was the lack of space within the traditional media for the new social movements. In addition to their lack of visibility, they accused the media of distorting and ridiculing their ideas. Therefore, the *freieradios*/free radio stations were a counter-balance, a supplement to the themes and opinions published in the mainstream media.

#### 3.1. The Greek case

In Greece, pirate radios functioned as a support for the pro-democracy groups that opposed the ruling military junta (1967–1974). During the 1973 uprising in Athens, the illegal radio broadcasting from within the Athens Polytechnic, and which played an important role in denouncing the dictatorship, was closed down by the army (Theodosiadou 2010: 39).

During the 1980s, and given the limitations of Greek society, with a weak civil society lacking in any social movement rooted in the communities, and with a government-controlled radio and television media that was viewed as a 'weapon of the state' (Theodosiadou 2010: 40), pirate radio stations emerged as a means by which the opposition parties could put pressure on the government to share access to the media, and through which groups of citizens could demand the right to use new radio broadcasting models that were closer to the local communities, in opposition to the state radio model.

Sophia Theodosiadou (2010) studied the pirate radio stations in Thessaloniki and concluded that the movement in this city differed in three ways from the

12. Radio Caroline broadcast from a ship in international waters off the coast of England, using frequencies that had already been allocated.
13. Free radio stations began appearing in East Germany with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 (Pinseler 2008).



14. Thessaloniki, the capital of the region of Macedonia, is the second-largest city in Greece.

movement in the capital, Athens.<sup>14</sup> First, unlike the movement in Athens, the leaders of the Thessaloniki radio movement had no interest in politics, and only wished to share music. Second, the Thessaloniki stations were originally atomized – it was only during the second half of the 1980s that they began to organize themselves into small groups with the aim of becoming professional and securing a broadcasting licence. Third, all the Thessaloniki stations wanted to do was to enjoy music, and, unlike their Athenian counterparts, not to turn into commercial broadcasters.

The Thessaloniki free radio stations shared some of the characteristics of the Portuguese case, particularly the first-phase stations, as identified by Ana Paula Azevedo (2001). The radio stations were created by amateurs and were dedicated to broadcasting rock and pop music to a young audience, just like the Portuguese free radio stations Caos, Delirio and Imprevisto, among others.

### 3.2. The French case

Jean-Jacques Cheval (2001) examined the free radio stations in the French province of Aquitaine and arrived at the conclusion that during the initial phase of the radio projects they were constituted by social movements organized by political parties, unions, environmental groups and university student associations.

In Bordeaux in the south of France, on 29 July 1978, the local communist party organized a day of struggle against the admission of Portugal, Spain and Greece into the EEC through an illegal radio broadcast lasting four hours (Cheval 2001: 3). The event was reported some days later in the *Sud Ouest* newspaper as an opportunity to create a radio station controlled by its users and open to the political parties and the unions.

In the same year another radio station appeared, this time the work of the environmentalist Non-Violent Action and Research Group (Groupes de Recherche et d'Action Non-Violente – GRANV), with the sole aim of demonstrating its solidarity with one of the group's members who was in jail. The station continued broadcasting after the prisoner's transfer because the group had come to realize its importance as a means of spreading its message and its ideas.

In March 1978 Radio Campus appeared, broadcasting from the university residences in Talence Pessac, and benefiting from the technical abilities of the students who made their own transmitter with a range of two kilometres. Its programme was mainly musical, although over time it began broadcasting debates and programmes of a cultural or political nature.

During this time, experiments of a transnational nature began to emerge. These included Radio Adour Navarre and Radio Atlantic 2000, both of which attempted to broadcast across the Pyrenees and offer French and Spanish Basques their own regional multilingual programming that would reanimate the nationalist dream of a country for the Basques that would incorporate all seven Spanish and French provinces.

Between 1981 and 1984 the free radio stations became local private stations, which at this first stage remained amateur while benefitting from the technical qualities and financial abilities of their owners to purchase equipment. With the introduction of the 1 August 1984 law permitting local radio stations to finance themselves through advertising, these free stations were able to become more professional (Cheval 2001: 15).

As in Portugal, the French free radio stations agitated within the political milieu and forced politicians to discuss the topic and to exchange their views, quite often in a heated and agitated manner.

Mathieu Dalle (2009) studied the relationship between the free radio stations and the fragmentation of the French political scene, analysing the positions of France's four main political parties: the Union for French Democracy (Union pour la démocratie française – UDF), the Rally for the French Republic (Rassemblement pour la république française – RPR), the Socialist Party (Parti socialiste – PS) and the French Communist Party (Parti communiste français – PCF).<sup>15</sup>

The existence of free radio stations was, in the first place, due to the state's monopoly of radio and television broadcasting. In France this monopoly began to be questioned after the monopoly in Italy had been declared non-constitutional in 1976. The position taken by each of the political parties was complex and indicative of the forces at play both within and between them, and between individuals with more or less power.

As far as Giscard d'Estaing (UDF) was concerned, free radio stations represented anarchy and private interests, which had to be contained. According to Dalle, this position was understandable, given that he was the serving president who saw in the free stations an opening through which the left-wing opposition parties could gain some space within the media (2009: 6), and moreover he could see the result of the Italian example. Jacques Chirac of the PRP, which was a member of the ruling coalition, viewed the matter differently. If he initially agreed with the president that the free radio stations needed to be contained, when he was the mayor of Paris (1977) he supported and was responsible for the establishment of a municipal radio station, Radio Tour Eiffel, through which he intended to exercise his boycott of the regional station, FR3, which he believed to be picking on him.

The PS was initially opposed to the liberalization, but this evolved into a position of support that came about as a result of meeting with the people behind the stations. Through a joint reflection published in the *Bastide* manifesto, the party declared itself opposed to the state's monopoly and began to invest in radio stations, both by publicly campaigning for existing stations, with François Mitterand's involvement in court in the defence of a radio station activist (Dalle 2009: 13), and through establishing its own stations, such as Radio Riposte, set up by the party's Paris federation.

The PSF, like the PCP in Portugal, was guided by its Marxist-Leninist ideology and structure, which argued for state control of the main sectors of economic activity, and should therefore have been opposed to the ending of the monopoly. However, just like the PCP, it supported decentralization and self-management. After its defeat in the 1978 elections, in a special issue of its magazine *La Nouvelle Critique*, published that June, the PCF changed its approach and presented itself as a defender of free radio and as a motor for reflection on the French radio and television broadcasting system. The magazine contained a number of essays by party members, intellectuals and students, five of which were dedicated to radio, containing a proposal to place free radio stations within a non-commercial and decentralized public service dynamic of municipal broadcasters supported by public radio staff (Dalle 2009: 16).

The choice of municipal stations was, according to Dalle, due to the fact that, like its Portuguese peer, the party was better represented at the local level, and it was there the communists invested a great deal in the establishment of free local radio stations in the municipalities they controlled.

15. The UDF is a centrist party founded in 1978 by the coalition supporting Giscard d'Estaing's candidacy for the presidential election. The RPR is a right-wing party founded by Jacques Chirac in 1976, which claims to be the heir to the Gaullist tradition.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The Portuguese free radio movement was born at the beginning of the 1980s and passed through three phases: (1) projects driven mainly by young amateurs who wanted to share pop and rock music; (2) the creation of local radio stations, often supported by local authorities and others, that concentrated on providing the local and regional information that the national radio stations did not offer; (3) the establishment of professional journalistic operations funded by advertising and which sought to compete with the national broadcasters.

By comparing what was happening in Portugal with what was happening elsewhere in Southern Europe, particularly in Greece and France, we see that the Portuguese free radio movement can be placed in the more general framework of the empowerment of social communication in Europe. The inclusion of the Portuguese case in the polarized pluralist model allowed us to understand how the movement contributed to the process of differentiation in the Portuguese media system.

The Greek case allows us to analyse the tension between groups of radio amateurs wanting to share their taste for music and the more formal groups that sought to professionalize their activities and to turn their amateur broadcasts into commercial radio stations.

The French case is an example of broadcasting's political importance and is in many ways similar to the Portuguese case, whether in the way the various political parties of the right and of the left approached the question, or in the impact illegal broadcasting had on the French broadcasting panorama. Because they happened earlier, Portuguese deputies had the positive French and German models and the negative Italian example in mind when they were elaborating their own radio law.

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